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NEAC #6222-80

12 September 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Ambassador William Leonhart  
Senior Review Panel

SUBJECT : Comments on Phase I

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1. I have read but not totally digested the Panel's massive paper. It is an impressive piece of work; we can't wait for Phase II. There follow a few disorganized specific comments and I've also attached some notes left me by Hal Ford.

2. When there was an Office of Current Intelligence it had, in addition to its responsibility for current political reporting, a more general responsibility for integrative reporting on subjects involving other offices as well as OCI. It also had a residual responsibility for "everything else" -- those military, economic, and scientific matters that were not addressed by the specialized offices. Thus OCI carried the responsibility for economic reporting on a number of the smaller countries in Africa and Latin America and for military reporting on quite a wide variety of lesser wars. In those days, the smallest problem within OSR's mission was the Arab-Israeli struggle, and OCI handled such things as India-Pakistan, Biafra, and even Vietnam (although OER became heavily engaged in the last). I simply don't know whether there exists now a clear understanding in NFAC of office boundaries or whether residual matters are specifically assigned to anyone.

3. OCI had this more general responsibility largely because virtually every matter of national intelligence concern ultimately goes back to a political decision. OCI was never fully effective in an integrative role partly because of the limitations imposed by its current reporting mission and partly because the other offices never fully accepted OCI in this capacity. There is no element in the present NFAC structure specifically charged with an integrative responsibility, and most efforts to produce genuinely cross-disciplinary studies have foundered on the granitic devotion of the offices to doing their own thing in their own way. (I fully agree with Hal's comments on this subject.) It is possible that the NIC may evolve into such an integrative element. I hope we will have assembled the raw capability in a few months. But the NIC would be hard pressed to perform this function for NFAC and at the same time emphasize interagency production; the time demands for the latter are too great.

4. As always with such studies, you ultimately fetch up against the problem of current reporting vs. research. I doubt if there are any good answers. The demands of the world we live in require a passionate

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pursuit to pragmatism. Moreover, particularly in the political field, we run the risk of losing sight of the fundamental purpose of intelligence: serving the policy apparatus of the US Government. The current channeling of resources into lines of investigation that were once considered on the other side of the boundary between intelligence and academia, i.e., societal change, increases the temptation to do work because the people are there to do it or because it interests the analysts, rather than because our masters really need it. I have yet to see a good definition of political intelligence research.

5. To a certain extent, these comments also apply to the serials. I have just read the results of the analysts' survey showing a remarkable enthusiasm at working levels for these publications. They would appear to be enthusiastic for precisely the wrong reasons. This work is not subject to the priorities set for us and is not subject to the production discipline that we use for our most important work. Again, everyone does his own thing. We continually groan at the burden of unanticipated requirements and we always have trouble finding someone to write an important paper when it is requested by a senior officer. Yet we are able to devote an extraordinary proportion of our effort to these publications for at best a secondary audience. Who are we working for?

6. Finally, I find your comments slightly unfair to SEC/OSR. SEC has had its troubles and I would agree that it has not yet measured up to what was hoped from it, but the effort that SEC devotes to major contributions to estimates is not apparent in your statistics. Large hunks of 11-3/8, for instance, come from SEC, including the endlessly repeated variations on the DCI's residual analyses. For the 1979 estimate, those analyses alone, I would guess, consumed more of SEC's time than any other three projects put together, and this may be an understatement. In the same vein, the disproportion between the manpower in MEAC and its published output reflects the kind of work it does: A team effort involving the structured aggregation of a large number of individual efforts. In other words, it was designed to produce one fundamental product a year and that's what it does.

*D.L.*

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